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During an inservice training program on the construction and use of informal reading inventories, 14 teachers of freshman English learned how to administer informal reading inventories, how to use information obtained to construct reading profiles, and how to use reading profiles to guide reading instruction. After six 2-hour sessions, they brought their classes to the Developmental Reading Laboratory four times during the school year for a week's instruction in vocabulary, comprehension, and study skills. The effectiveness of the program was evaluated by the teachers and students alike. Results showed that students and teachers gained from the use of informal reading inventories. An inservice training program focused on the construction and use of these inventories effected changes in teacher behavior in terms of knowledge of the nature of reading processes, the meaning of reading difficulties, and the use of new reading instructional techniques. Results also revealed that future inservice training programs should emphasize organizational procedures of grouping and individualized instruction. (NS)

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THE EFFECT OF INFORMAL READING INVENTORIES ON A HIGH SCHOOL READING PROGRAM

Reading specialists assume and teach that the goals of instruction in reading and English are so similar that every English teacher is, perforce, a reading teacher.(8) While admitting that most English teachers lack "reading" preparation,(4) they assume that with added training in reading techniques, a good English teacher will be able to become a good reading teacher and, furthermore will want to.(5) They assume that the diagnostic point of view (whereby, given standardized test scores to use as one index to instructional levels, the reading performances of individual pupils are assessed, diagnosed, discussed with students, and remediated) is practicable for the content-oriented teacher who must meet over 100 students a day; and that therefore an informal reading inventory is an instrument useful enough to provide information upon which to base teaching plans.

There is general agreement among such authorities as Austin and Huebner,(1) Betts,(2) Botel,(3) and McKee,(7) that informal

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reading tests are useful in evaluating pupil performance and some additional suggestions made by Kender[6] were supported by our experiences in this study. Kender pointed out that passages to be used for informal test items should be chosen from the reading materials in which the students are going to be instructed and that persons who administer informal inventories need special training.

Construction and use of an informal reading inventory as the focus for in-service training in reading improvement in a large comprehensive high school, brought to light valuable information about these assumptions.

Goals

We were concerned especially with teachers of freshman English who needed special training in reading instruction to meet the needs of 1200 incoming freshmen, over a third of whom were socially disadvantaged.

We said that in-service training devoted to helping freshman English teachers learn to construct and administer an informal reading inventory would have a positive effect on the entire Reading Program, since it would make teachers, Reading Lab, and students, more effective and efficient.

Methods and Procedures

Because we believed that improved diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses was the key to improving reading skills, we reorganized the reading program to reflect this emphasis. Four phases of the reading program were viewed as interlocking: in-service training of English teachers, informal classroom diagnosis of reading skills,

adaptation of Reading Laboratory lessons to accommodate group needs, and provision for special skill resources and reading specialist help for classroom follow-up. Teachers participated in six in-service training sessions focused on construction and administration of informal reading inventories. This information was used to compile individual reading profiles. Then a composite class profile became the framework for Reading Laboratory lessons and subsequent reinforcement in the classrooms.

Fourteen teachers of freshman English classes met after school for six two-hour in-service training sessions where they were shown how to administer informal reading tests, how to use this information to construct individual and class reading profiles and how to evaluate the profiles and use them to guide their reading instruction.

Since our students' levels ranged from retardation to acceleration, we needed an informal reading inventory that was broad in scope. Basing our informal reading inventory on a recognized heirarchy of reading skills allowed for this scope and for comparison with standardized test results.

The first in-service session was devoted to an analysis of students' standardized test scores and discussion of the purposes of informal reading inventories. Techniques of recording oral reading and methods of interpreting errors were introduced at the second session and time was allowed for practicing different techniques. The sequence of learning word analysis skills was the main topic of

the third session and a brief word attack test, to be used by the teachers in their classrooms, was introduced.

The teachers were given instruction for compiling word lists from the textbooks assigned to their respective classes and these lists were used at the following session to make up informal tests of vocabulary in and out of context. The fifth session was spent in a group experience constructing different types of comprehension questions from a single article. After this experience the teachers were expected to make up questions in the areas of main idea, details, inference, and interpretation from their own textbooks.

Reading profiles were interpreted at the last in-service session and suggestions were made for basing classroom reading instruction on individual needs.

Teachers of freshman English classes in the slow, average, and fast tracks were then scheduled to bring their classes into the Developmental Reading Laboratory for four one-week sessions throughout the school year.

The class reading profiles were used by the Reading Lab Specialist and the English teacher to plan the week's lab instruction around the needs of the individuals in each class. The results indicated that instruction was needed in three major areas: vocabulary, comprehension, and study skills. Follow-up material was available for further reinforcement after lab week. In this study, vocabulary data is analyzed.

Measuring Procedures

The following procedures were used to gather data:

1. A tabulation of 14 teachers' evaluations of Workshop procedures

2. A tabulation of reading profiles from nine classes (three fash, three slow, three average)

3. A tabulation of 270 students' evaluation of Lab instruction

4. A tabulation of 270 students' evaluations of own needs from a check sheet of reading skills

5. Comparisons of responses made by teachers and students to survey questionnaires

6. Tabulation of Free Response Evaluations

7. Comparison of Free Response Evaluations with conference discussions

Results

A summary of evaluations made by fourteen teachers of the In-Service Workshop in Reading follows:

TABLE I

	Yes	No	Ade-quate	Not Desirable	No Response
VALUE					
Students	43	21	-	0	21
Teachers	64	14	-	0	22
USE					
Reading Laboratory					
Orient Students	64	22	-	0	14
Training	57	36	-	0	7
Follow-Up					
Materials	64	14	-	0	22
Demonstrations	50	21	-	0	29
Conferences	20	21	-	0	50
Classroom					
Daily Class Work	50	29	-	0	21
Classroom Guidance	29	57	-	0	14
Classroom Gollow-Up					
Techniques	64	7	-	0	29
Materials	36	28	-	0	36
Organization	28	36	-	0	36
TOO MUCH TIME SPENT?					
Workshop	43	7	36	0	14
Constructing IRI	64	0	22	0	14
Administering IRI	50	0	29	0	21
Evaluating IRI	50	27	0	7	14

Analysis of the data revealed the following:

1. In-service training focused on the construction of informal reading inventories is valuable in changing teacher behavior. This statement was supported by the following results: 64% of the teachers replying to Evaluation of Workshop Procedures indicated that constructing an informal reading inventory had added to their knowledge of reading. Evidence of this effect was given in answers

to the question regarding specific reading improvements: 64% of the teachers said they used new techniques, 36% used new materials, and 28% used new classroom organization, 64% said they oriented students to work in the Reading Laboratory, 57% said that informal reading inventories were helpful in teaming with reading specialists in the Reading Laboratory; however, only 50% were able to integrate the administration of informal reading inventories into daily classroom work at the beginning of the year.

Even though the majority of the teachers felt that the inventory was valuable and useful, 64% felt too much time was spent constructing it, and 50% felt that they spent too much time administering and evaluating it. However, only 43% felt that they spent too much time in the workshop itself.

2. Teachers who have improved diagnostic techniques reveal need for follow-up training in grouping and individualized instruction. This was shown by the fact that only 29% said they were able to use Reading Profiles to guide instruction in their classrooms.

TABLE II

Teacher	% Phonetic Analysis			% Structural Analysis			% Dictionary			% Context			% Agree-ment
	T	S	SE	T	S	SE	T	S	SE	T	S	SE	
A	84	19	50	73	27	86	100	3	14	81	35	45	17
B	50	27	33	65	23	62	26	23	47	80	30	43	18
C	39	52	50	91	43	64	61	13	50	96	30	40	25
D	48	30	40	83	87	70	35	52	20	91	21	40	30
E	60	14	62	61	61	87	18	7	46	43	14	46	18
F	60	42	34	70	57	39	4	4	21	43	21	47	20
G	25	16	43	75	75	52	20	16	78	20	8	56	27
H	22	15	50	100	74	69	33	8	77	40	11	58	29
I	14	5	31	65	69	37	0	4	81	17	22	56	25

Key: T = Teacher made Reading Profiles
S = Student Inventory of reading needs
SE = Student Evaluation of Lab instruction

Analysis of Table II revealed the following:

1. Students exposed to individual diagnostic inventories recognized their strengths and weaknesses, recognized instruction designed to help them, and were motivated to learn.

After a discussion of their reading progress with their classroom teacher and an introductory lesson in the Reading Lab, students were asked to show what they felt to be their strengths and weaknesses on a Student Inventory Form. There was agreement between teacher's estimate of student's reading need and students' estimate of their needs as expressed in the student inventory 24% of the time.

For the purposes of this study, analysis was made of instruction given in vocabulary development.

When students were given instruction and results analyzed regardless of track or need, they recognized four approaches to vocabulary improvement as follows:

In all tracks a range of from 31% to 62% of the students reported instruction given in phonetic analysis. The range reporting instruction on structural analysis was greater and extended from 39% to 87%. Even greater was the range reporting instruction in dictionary skills, 14% to 81%. The range reporting receiving instruction in the use of context clues was narrowest: 40% to 56%.

Although they did not always agree with teachers' estimate of their reading needs, most of the time students recognized the purpose of specific instruction.

2. <u>The needs of tracks are different and should shape both informal reading inventories and instruction</u>.

Teacher estimate and student estimate showed variation according to track while Reading lab emphasis showed less variation. While 77% to 81% of the students in the fast tracks reported that they received instruction in dictionary skills, 20% to 46% in the average, and 14% to 50% in the slow reported receiving this instruction. Teachers recognized different needs according to tracks. For example, in the use of context clues the ranges were 80% to 96% for slow, 43% to 91% for average, and 17% to 40% for fast.

3. <u>There was a small but positive effect on Reading Lab procedures</u>: 57% of the teachers said they used class profiles as

the basis for teaming with the lab specialists, 36% said they were using new materials supplied by the Reading Lab.

Free Response Analysis

Nine of the fourteen teachers included in our study chose to make free responses in addition to the specific questions on the teacher evaluation sheet. Their responses may be roughly grouped into those concerning the effectiveness of the informal reading inventory and those concerning the effectiveness of the instruction given in the Reading Laboratory.

All five of the teachers who commented that the Informal Reading Inventory was not useful gave lack of time to administer, score, and evaluate it as their main reason. The teachers who commented that the informal reading inventory was potentially useful qualified their comments with suggestions about adjusting the inventory items to suit the needs of different tracks.

Three teachers commented that the Reading Lab instruction was not noticeably cued to the weaknesses shown in the class profile and felt that they could have handled the materials used in their own classrooms just as well. Six teachers suggested that the Reading Lab offerings could be adapted to fit special students needs. This pointed up the range of teacher background and experience which must be assessed when planning any in-service program.

Written comments were supported by teacher's suggestions given during individual conferences. In addition, teachers suggested

that time for pre-planning was one of the most important factors leading to good instruction and should be included before each week in the Reading Lab. This supports our conclusion that the next step in in-service training must emphasize organizational procedures of grouping and individualization.

Summary and Implications

Both teachers and students saw positive benefits resulting from construction and use of an informal reading inventory.

Teachers improved their knowledge of the nature of reading processes and the meaning of reading difficulties, but some thought the method was too time consuming, not specific enough to differentiate needs from track to track, not easy to integrate into daily work, not enough by itself for optimum focusing of instruction in the Reading Lab, or for optimum follow-up in classrooms. Some teachers either believe they were already teaching reading, or that they were English specialists who should leave reading to other specialists. Those teachers who saw the need for "remediation" were enthusiastic.

Results pointed up the fact that informal reading inventories must be carefully tailored to meet the needs of both teachers and students. In a school where students are tracked, one informal reading inventory will not do for all situations. There should be as much change in reading areas assessed from track to track as there is in objectives differentiated from track to track. The teacher

should continue to construct parts of the inventory, but guidance must be available as to which sections are most valuable to administer and to interpret for her level of student.

Constructing an informal reading inventory turned out to be an alerting device for teachers, but pointed up the fact that it requires extensive knowledge of instructional techniques to become useful. This defines the next phase of in-service training.

These attitudes lead us to believe that in a large high school the first thrust of in-service might well be to help English teachers define the responsibilities they must assume in reading. Suggestions for use of the Reading Lab for remediation, or as a Reading Resource Center for different tracks and various schedules during the school year reflected the differences in viewpoint which English teachers brought to their role in reading. Informal reading inventories may be most valued by teachers where they do not already have the benefit of administrative provisions to improve reading and must depend mostly on themselves and their own knowledge. In schools where students are tested for placement, tracked, and given differentiated English materials for tracks; or in those where teachers have a number of reading resources, such as reading specialists, a reading clinic, a reading lab, and a reading center--in-service training must begin with frank exchange of opinions about roles in reading.

However, even though in large high schools, in-service training in the use of informal reading inventory reveals many problems reading specialists cannot stop trying to promote the use of

diagnostic procedures. Only in this way will we finally arrive at our goals of "every teacher a reading teacher" and every student a receiver of individual instruction.

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